

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

HOMESITE INS. CO. OF THE MIDWEST,	:	Civil No. 1:22-CV-1664
	:	
	:	
Plaintiff	:	(Judge Munley)
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
OMAR EWIDEH, et al.,	:	(Magistrate Judge Carlson)
	:	
Defendants	:	

MEMORANDUM ORDER

THE BACKGROUND OF THIS ORDER IS AS FOLLOWS:

This case is one of two related civil actions involving Omar Ewideh and Nivertiti Geaith as *pro se* litigants and Homesite Insurance Company. There is a remarkable quality to the litigation undertaken by these *pro se* parties. In a short span of time, Ewideh and Geaith have indulged in a breathtaking array of litigation mayhem and misconduct in these two cases. Moreover, they have, to an astonishing and unprecedented degree, been derelict in their duties as litigants. Thus, Ewideh and Geaith have repeatedly disobeyed or ignored court orders; have failed to respond to pleadings; have refused to file an answer to this complaint, despite being ordered to do so; and have persistently declined to provide discovery. The staggering array of defaults by Ewideh and Geaith have been thoroughly documented in our prior

decisions and Reports and Recommendations, which are incorporated by reference in this order. See e.g., Ewideh v. Homesite Ins. Co. of the Midwest, No. 1:23-CV-812, 2023 WL 5170379, at *1 (M.D. Pa. July 17, 2023); Ewideh v. Homesite Ins. Co. of the Midwest, No. 1:23-CV-812, 2023 WL 4552888, at *1 (M.D. Pa. July 14, 2023); Homesite Ins. Co. of the Midwest v. Ewideh, No. 1:22-CV-1664, 2023 WL 4471489, at *1 (M.D. Pa. July 11, 2023); Homesite Ins. Co. of the Midwest v. Ewideh, No. 1:22-CV-1664, 2023 WL 3794509, at *1 (M.D. Pa. June 2, 2023); Homesite Ins. Co. of the Midwest v. Ewideh, No. 1:22-CV-1664, 2023 WL 4138328, at *1 (M.D. Pa. May 30, 2023); Homesite Ins. Co. of the Midwest v. Ewideh, No. 1:22-CV-1664, 2023 WL 3035313, at *1 (M.D. Pa. Mar. 7, 2023), report and recommendation adopted sub nom. Homesite Ins. Co. of Midwest v. Ewideh, No. 1:22-CV-1664, 2023 WL 3866607 (M.D. Pa. Apr. 24, 2023); Homesite Ins. Co. of the Midwest v. Ewideh, No. 1:22-CV-1664, 2023 WL 426923, at *1 (M.D. Pa. Jan. 26, 2023).

On November 1, 2023, as we returned to duty as a recall magistrate judge, we received a referral from the district court of an emergency motion for protective order and sanctions filed by Homesite in this case, (Doc. 164), which alleged a new form of litigation misconduct by Ewideh and Geath. Specifically, this motion alleges that these *pro se* defendants have engaged in a pattern of repeated and

abusive communications with Plaintiff's counsel, including profane, threatening, harassing, and insulting communications. (Id.)

Despite being ordered on multiple occasions to address this motion in writing, the defendants have failed to follow this court's orders. Moreover, when we set this matter for a hearing on January 4, 2024, the defendants sought to avoid this hearing on at least ten occasions before failing to appear. The defendants then compounded these failures by providing the court with a series of apparently inconsistent medical excuses for their failure to appear, a course of conduct which ultimately compelled us on January 10, 2024, to enter the following order:

Given these troubling questions regarding whether the defendants have made misrepresentations to the court, IT IS ORDERED that the defendants' failure to appear on January 4, 2024, is DEEMED UNEXCUSED, and the defendants shall provide an attestation under oath by 5:00 p.m. on January 12, 2024, explaining the apparent discrepancies between the statements made to the court on January 4, 2024, (Doc. 203), and the information set forth in the defendants' latest submission.

(Doc. 216 at 10).

Presented with this order the defendants have followed what is for them now a familiar course: They have filed motions seeking our recusal. (Docs. 217, 218). These recusal requests, like the prior recusal motions lodged by the defendants, are based upon our order directing them to explain the discrepancies in their prior filings. Thus, the defendants seek our recusal based upon our rulings.

As we have explained to Ewideh and Geaith, the law simply does not work this way. Rather, as we have previously underscored for these litigants:

The legal standards which govern such recusal requests were aptly summarized in Conklin v. Warrington Township, 476 F. Supp. 2d 458 (M.D. Pa. 2007). In terms that are equally applicable here, the court explained that:

The disqualification standard is set forth in 28 U.S.C. § 455, which provides in pertinent part as follows:

(a) Any justice, judge, or magistrate judge of the United States shall disqualify himself in any proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned.

(b) He shall also disqualify himself in the following circumstances: (1) Where he has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party....

Id. Pursuant to the above quoted language, the court must consider whether its rulings and statements objectively produce the appearance of bias against [the plaintiff]. As explained by the Supreme Court, these provisions “require ... ‘bias and prejudice’ ... to be evaluated on an objective basis, so that what matters is not the reality of bias or prejudice but its appearance.” Liteky v. United States, 510 U.S. 540, 548, 114 S.Ct. 1147, 127 L.Ed.2d 474 (1994). This objective standard requires recusal when a “reasonable man knowing all the circumstances would harbor doubts concerning the judge's impartiality.” Edelstein v. Wilentz, 812 F.2d 128, 131 (3d Cir.1987) (citing United States v. Dalfonso, 707 F.2d 757, 760 (3d Cir.1983)); see also In re Antar, 71 F.3d 97, 101 (3d Cir.1995). If the record presents a close question, the court must resolve the issue in favor of disqualification. Nichols v. Alley, 71 F.3d 347, 352 (10th Cir.1995).

Id. at 462-63.

It is clear, however, that a party's disappointment with what the party anticipates may be the court's rulings cannot form the basis for recusal. As this court has aptly noted:

The Third Circuit has repeatedly observed that “a party's displeasure with legal rulings does not form an adequate basis for recusal.” Securacomm Consulting, Inc. v. Securacom, Inc., 224 F.3d 273, 278 (3d Cir.2000) (citing In re TMI Litig., 193 F.3d 613, 728 (3d Cir.1999) and Jones v. Pittsburgh Nat'l Corp., 899 F.2d 1350, 1356 (3d Cir.1990)). Subsections 455(a) and (b)(1) require the source of bias to be extrajudicial, that is stemming from a source outside of the proceeding, or of such an intensity as to make a fair trial impossible. Blanche Rd. Corp. v. Bensalem Twp., 57 F.3d 253 (3d Cir.1995), cert. denied, 516 U.S. 915, 116 S.Ct. 303, 133 L.Ed.2d 208 (1995). As stated by the Supreme Court:

[O]pinions formed by the judge on the basis of facts introduced or events occurring in the course of the current proceedings, or of prior proceedings, do not constitute a basis for a bias or partiality motion unless they display a deep-seated favoritism or antagonism that would make fair judgment impossible. Thus, judicial remarks during the course of a trial that are critical or disapproving of, or even hostile to, counsel, the parties, or their cases, ordinarily do not support a bias or partiality challenge. They *may* do so if they reveal an opinion that derives from an extrajudicial source; and they will do so if they reveal such a high degree of favoritism or antagonism as to make fair judgment impossible.

Liteky, 510 U.S. at 555, 114 S.Ct. 1147 (emphasis in original).

Id. at 463.

Furthermore, in assessing recusal requests, courts must remain mindful that, in the hands of some litigants, a recusal motion may simply be a calculated tactical tool designed to avoid the result which the law dictates in a case or attempt to unilaterally choose a new judge. Thus, in every instance:

[T]he court must consider whether attacks on a judge's impartiality are simply subterfuge to circumvent anticipated adverse rulings. In re Antar, 71 F.3d at 101; Alexander v. Primerica Holdings, Inc., 10 F.3d 155, 162 (3d Cir.1993). Indeed, a judge “has as strong a duty to sit when there is no legitimate reason to recuse as he does to recuse when the law and facts require.” Bryce v. Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Colorado, 289 F.3d 648, 659 (10th Cir.2002) (quoting Nichols, 71 F.3d at 351); Cooney v. Booth, 262 F.Supp.2d 494, 508 (E.D.Pa.2003); see also United States v. Snyder, 235 F.3d 42, 46 n. 1 (1st Cir.2000); Curley v. St. John's University, 7 F.Supp.2d 359, 362 (S.D.N.Y.1998).

Id. at 463.

Judged against these legal standards, we must decline these latest requests that we recuse ourselves from this case since the plaintiffs' request for our recusal rest upon our rulings and recommendations in this case. Given that the Third Circuit has repeatedly observed that “a party's displeasure with legal rulings does not form an adequate basis for recusal,” Securacomm Consulting, Inc. v. Securacom, Inc., 224 F.3d 273, 278 (3d Cir.2000), the plaintiffs' disappointment with our decisions simply cannot be converted into grounds compelling our recusal.

Ewideh v. Homesite Ins. Co. of Midwest, No. 1:23-CV-812, 2023 WL 5183043, at

*2–3 (M.D. Pa. Aug. 11, 2023).

These principles remain fully applicable here. It is well-settled that “a party's displeasure with legal rulings does not form an adequate basis for recusal,” Securacomm Consulting, Inc. v. Securacom, Inc., 224 F.3d 273, 278 (3d Cir.2000). Therefore, since we have “as strong a duty to sit when there is no legitimate reason to recuse as [we] do[] to recuse when the law and facts require.” Bryce v. Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Colorado, 289 F.3d 648, 659 (10th Cir.2002), the defendants’ motions to recuse, (Docs. 217, 218), are DENIED and the defendants are reminded of their obligation to comply with our January 10, 2024, order.

So ordered this 11th day of January 2024.

/s/ Martin C. Carlson

Martin C. Carlson

United States Magistrate Judge